Aint I A Woman?

a midwest newspaper of women's liberation

25¢

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FEMALE LIBERATION CENTER
P. O. Box 954
Chapel Hill, N. C. 27514

SOJOURNER TRUTH,
"THE LIBYAN SIBYL.

"That man over there say that a woman needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helped me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me a best place... And ain't I a women? Look at me. Look at my arm! I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me... And ain't I a women? I could work as much and eat as much as a man when I could get it, and bear the lash as well... And ain't I a woman? I have borned thirteen children and seen them most all sold off into slavery. And when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard... And ain't I a woman?"

Sojurner Truth: Speech before the Woman's Rights Convention at Akron, Ohio in 1851.

letters

New Orleans, La.
November 18, 1970

Sisters:

We want to apologize and criticize ourselves for distributing the material from "Red Women's Detachment" in New York. Our decision to distribute that material to some of our sisters came in the wake of our having discovered an information gatherer working with us, coming to mistrust our own sense of things. We thought we had to treat our "liberalism." Some of the doubts we had about GLF, women's liberation, and our disgust with the roles of SWP-YSA and NOW in the Womens's movement were expressed in the RWD papers. Our mistake was to not trust our own ability to express what we had observed. Rather we took, whole and uninvestigated, papers from an unknown group. Also there was a great deal in the papers that we did not agree with, particularly the tone. For this we severely criticize ourselves. Since that time we have found out that the organization (RWD) is actually only two people, and the papers do not grow from or reflect practice.

There is much to say about our deeper understanding, which would require a long paper, and this is meant to be a letter. The principle of our new thinking is about faith in the people. I realize that I lacked such faith in thinking people had to be pinned against the wall to raise their political consciousness. But the lack of faith is also reflected in a fear of struggling with sisters and brothers. I think most of us have been unwilling to trust our political judgment and growth, and to enter into discussions with people, committed to learn. Too often we are defensive with revolutionary and potentially revolutionary comrades.

Futhermore, since the summer, we have thought a great deal about the questions we had which led us to distribute the papers. Also, two of us went to Cuba on the Venceremos Brigade, and there we struggled over the questions we had with other women, white and third world, and with men, white, third-world, and gay, as well as the Cubans.

Yet I am convinced that the revolutionary love that is necessary for our long struggle will only be born of our growing struggles, not our wishes. That is what I learned in Cuba: unity and love come from struggle, and such struggle must be continual for unity and love to subsist.

What we must now commit ourselves to is the struggle. We must build a base among women-- the working women, mothers, young girls-- not just our educated sisters. We must analyze our conditions, learn about struggles all over the world, develop a strategy in relation to the total revolutionary movement. We must decide on priorities. If we cannot accept the necessity for priorities, we cannot be serious about change. Whether or not there should be a women's movement, whether or not there must be female leadership, whether or not revolutionary men must be clear on "the woman question," there is no question of priorities. Women's involvement and consciouness and growing vanguard role in the movement is an irreversible fact. No, by priorities I mean: Who will we organize among, since we cannot organize everywhere? What are our demands? How much can we satisfy personal needs before the revolution such as the kind of relations with men and children we project, life-style, skills, etc., and what do we have to sacrifice in order to build a revolutionary movement and win?

More than anything, in Cuba, I was humbled by learning the necessity for sacrifice and hard work; how serious and long-term (all our lives) is our task. We learned this from the Cubans as well as the Vietnamese, Laotians, Cambodians, Africans, Latin Americans. In our rebellion against woman's traditional role, we have tended to scoff at the virtue of sacrifice, which has been forced upon women and other oppressed peoples. But sacrifice is one of the basic necessities in a revolutionary struggle, for a vanguard force, and is a virtue we should transform from its present bourgeois setting, which keeps people down, to a revolutionary perspective. Let us not throw out the baby with the bath water.
Power to the sisters, Venceremos,
Love
Roxanne Dunbar

Reprinted from Liberation News Service
Radical Media Bulletin Board

From: AIN'T I A WOMAN?, PO Box 1169,
Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

Dear Sisters and Brothers:
Although we have used your service and appreciated having it made available to us, we feel we must be honest with you about our concerns. The service in general has not presented a very high consciousness of women's oppression or of the movement toward the liberation of women. Often a news packet will have several articles on women while articles not dealing specifically with women actually ignore women. One example of this would be your coverage of the Panthers' Constitutional Convention. You mentioned that the Radical Lesbians walked out in one sentence with nothing more about how women were treated. We feel you sincerely try but we feel you must try harder. Women all over the country are starting to think we need a news service of our own if the services now available do not begin to display a higher consciousness when it comes to women.

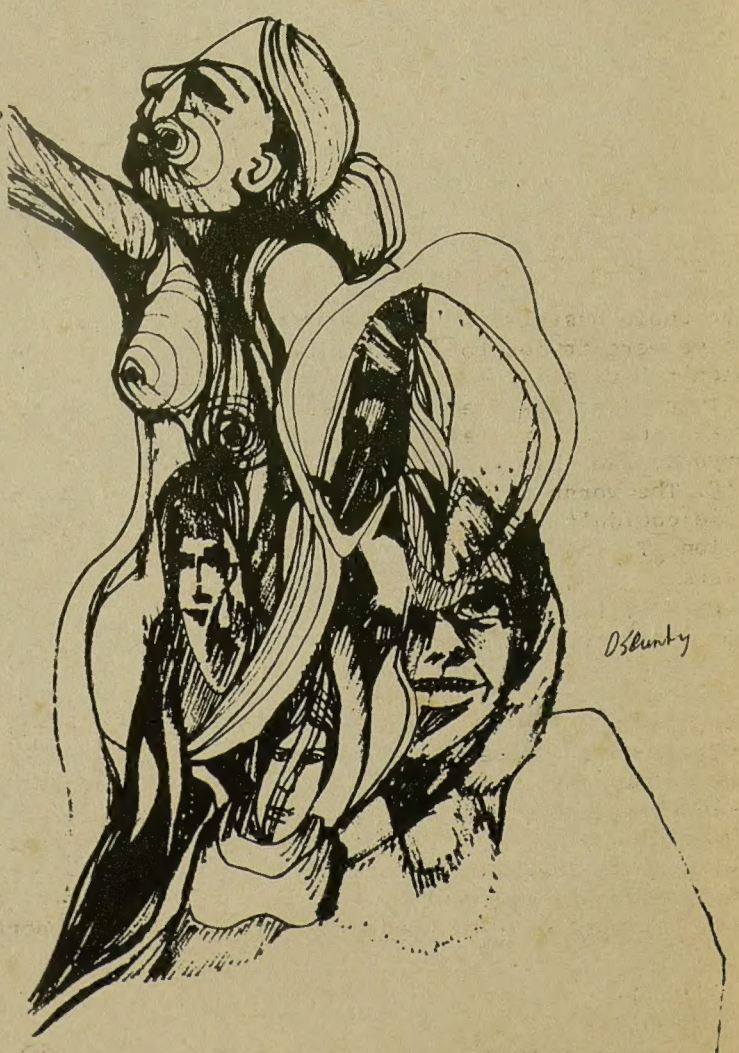
From the LNS Women's Caucus:

Dear Sisters of Ain't I A Woman?:
We have thought a lot about your criticism and we accept it. You are right, we haven't had a feminist consciousness throughout the packet. Most of us who have been on the staff for a while came to LNS without much political consciousness at all. In the past two years, some of us went from being general shit workers to having a voice in policy and decision making. But the tremendous amount of time we spend at LNS and the fact that LNS developed as part of a male-dominated movement, kept us for a long time from developing a women's consciousness and expressing it in the packet.

Now, we are trying to change. All of the new people presently coming to work at LNS are women and many of them do have close ties with the women's movement and have developed their political consciousness there. Together we are struggling to make the LNS packet reflect a feminist consciousness.

Your letter was important to us. We realize that stories like the Panther Convention must be written by women. We are open to further criticism and we hope you don't give up on us, but keep on reading the packets.
Love,
LNS Women

(AIAW -- We have heard that since this reply to us was written that some women have left LNS and we don't know at this time how many women are on the LNS staff or how much of a struggle is going on over the above issue. We trust we will be able to tell by reading their news packets in the future.)



high school women

Last week I went to West High with women from WL to speak to the students. Women's workshops were organized to discuss Lesbianism, Marriage and Roles, and Daycare and a male group discussed roles and sterotypes.

I walked in after the workshop on marriage had started. Having previously attended other workshops with women I did not know, I expected the usual hostility and defensiveness. I was elated that the 50 or so women were having a real warm and personal discussion. Ann from WL talked about her child and how daycare helps the child as well as the mother, by surrounding him with other people who play with him so he does not feel so dependent on one person. Some of the high school students really related to this, and I think because she had a child, trusted her opinion about daycare.

When the second hour came all the students went to one room and some of the women decided they had had enough of <u>just</u> relating to women and were ready to talk to men. Two WL women explained that they had come to speak <u>to women</u>, and that they didn't intend to speak to a mixed group. The high school women were really insistent so we broke into two groups, one mixed, and one women only. Because the women went into the second workshop with the intention of "telling off the men", it developed into a shouting ego trip, and our presence there was totally unnecessary. What I realized was that we had made a terrible mistake by dividing into two groups. First of all we insulted the WL women who had so insisted on talking to women only, by <u>leaving them</u> to talk to men (remember that trip) in a mixed group. Secondly we had been invited there for a reason- to speak to women about women. Experience has showed that speaking in a mixed group never allows women to relate to each other - but again puts them in the position where they have to be defensive. Where the hour workshop could have been really important as far as allowing women the opportunity to speak about themselves, (as the second hour women-only workshop did,) the time was wasted. I came away really upset for having allowed myself to fall for the old line of putting the interests of men before the interests of women, and frustrated because of the comparison of how really beautiful the first workshop was compared to the second. I think it's real important to understand <u>why</u> we should be aware of how easy it is to be divisive, and how destructive it is. We should not have offered any alternatives for a mixed group to the high school women, and should certainly not have supported them when they insisted. This is not saying we would not have allowed one to take place, if they thought it was so important. By supporting it and attending it we gave validity to a masculine-identified discussion that was anti-women.

Bloomington's Women Center

The whole business of the house came up when we were trying to find a place that wouldn't have all the drawbacks of the apartment that was the center last year. For all our sentimental attachments to it, everybody saw that the apartment was IMPOSSIBLE. The worst thing about it was that people couldn't live in it with the organization. Trying to do so was destructive of them.

When we started looking for a house, the first thing we found was that it was impossible to find anything to rent. When the chance came to buy on contract with the owner of 414 North Park, we began - the few of us around at the end of summer - to think of ways we could do it. The biggest problem was getting the down-payment money ($6000) plus $200 for insurance and legal fees. We were able to find people (some of them outside WL) who would put up the money, but most of them <u>needed</u> it back soon. We figured that we could sell shares in the house to pay them back. We would need to sell 260 shares at $25/share to make $6500, a sum that would allow a small cushion for emergencies. This did not seem impossible - in fact, we thought it could be done. We have a large membership, a larger periphery, friends in many parts. We even thought it might be easily done.

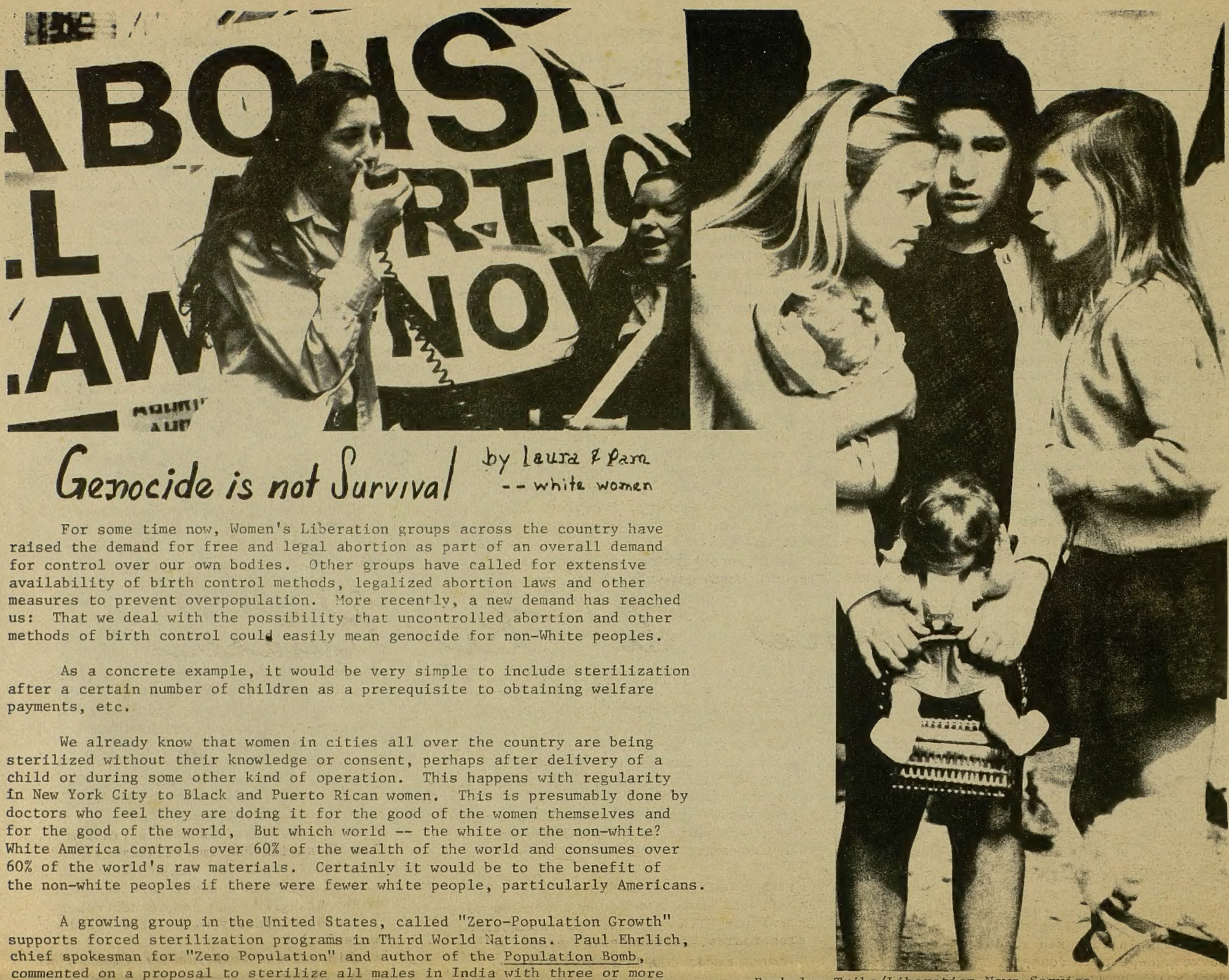
We put the matter before Women's Liberation at the September meeting and got an enthusiastic response. Since then hundreds of people have seen and used the house - it has been successful as a center. The people who live in it and make the monthly payments have not been too hassled by living with a center. It has been a refuge for many other women who needed a temporary place to stay. It has housed the office, the literature, many a meeting of support or activity group. All in all, it's a good house.

But we have a problem. We didn't expect September to be a good month for shares. October was our big hype. And by the end of October we had sold 16 (sixteen)shares. That is not very many shares. Moreover interest seems to be dying down. The house has begun to be taken for granted.

Well, we can't take it for granted. There is no way we can keep the house if we don't pay the money. It's as simple as that. If we want a center - this center - we will have to sell shares.

Bloomington WLF Newsletter, Nov., 1970

for comments or contributions write:
Bloomington WLF 414 N. Park
Bloomington, Indiana 47401



Genocide is not Survival

by Laura & Pam
-- white women

For some time now, Women's Liberation groups across the country have raised the demand for free and legal abortion as part of an overall demand for control over our own bodies. Other groups have called for extensive availability of birth control methods, legalized abortion laws and other measures to prevent overpopulation. More recently, a new demand has reached us: That we deal with the possibility that uncontrolled abortion and other methods of birth control could easily mean genocide for non-White peoples.

As a concrete example, it would be very simple to include sterilization after a certain number of children as a prerequisite to obtaining welfare payments, etc.

We already know that women in cities all over the country are being sterilized without their knowledge or consent, perhaps after delivery of a child or during some other kind of operation. This happens with regularity in New York City to Black and Puerto Rican women. This is presumably done by doctors who feel they are doing it for the good of the women themselves and for the good of the world, But which world -- the white or the non-white? White America controls over 60% of the wealth of the world and consumes over 60% of the world's raw materials. Certainly it would be to the benefit of the non-white peoples if there were fewer white people, particularly Americans.

A growing group in the United States, called "Zero-Population Growth" supports forced sterilization programs in Third World Nations. Paul Ehrlich, chief spokesman for "Zero Population" and author of the Population Bomb, commented on a proposal to sterilize all males in India with three or more children: "We (the U.S. Government) should have applied pressure on the Indian Government to go ahead with the plan. We should have volunteered logistic support ...Coercion? Perhaps, but coercion in a good cause."

Why is the advocacy of compulsory sterilization particularly directed at India? India's population per square kilometer was only 113 in 1957, while the population per square kilometer in England was 208, Belgium 288, and Holland 304. Why not direct resources into reclaiming land and making it more habitable? Or perhaps the justification was the periodic famines in India. In 1952, for example, 20 million Indians were starving, although India's Government warehouses were so full of food that the U.S. and Canada were asked to postpone shipments of wheat until the next year. After investigation, the author of a report in the New York Times concluded that, "India's current problem apparently is not a food shortage or famine, therefore, but widespread unemployment..."

The real causes of starvation and poverty is not overpopulation but the poor distribution of wealth in the world, due to man-made institutions, barriers, and social conditions. Any person concerned with the population explosion who points first to Black and Third World peoples as a prime example of "too many kids" is in reality suggesting and inadvertently supporting an already existing program of Genocide.

India is only one example. In Puerto Rico, birth control pills were tested for at least three years before they were allowed on the American market. In several Third World Nations, including Vietnam, experiments are being conducted with chemicals, to induce temporary sterilization. For some women the effects are permanent. These are subtle manifestations of the racism in this country which declares that non-white peoples simply aren't as important as whites.

Groups concerned with "overpopulation" and Women's Liberation are going to have to deal with the fact that now, as in the past, demands by white groups can very easily be converted into justification for futher oppression and loss of self-determination for the non-white peoples of the world.

Racism has always allowed white people to gain "more freedom" at the expense of the rest of the world. Our demand must be analyzed in the light of our acknowledged racism. Abortions and other forms of birth control can continue to be legitimate demands of a group concerned with world liberation only if they are put forward as elective alternatives. Measures have to be found to prevent the possibility of coercion or ways in which they can be used for genocide. These measures must be included in our demands for self determination.

Otherwise, we as two individual women who are working within the Women's Liberation Movement, feel that the demand for legalized abortion should not be pushed further.

Reprinted from W.L. Newsletter
W.L. Library, 1131 So. Brook St.
Louisville, Kentucky 40203

Berkeley Tribe/Liberation News Service

Berkeley(LNS)--One hundred and fifty women recently crowded into a Berkeley City Council meeting to demand a public hearing "at which all the raped women of Berkeley can finally speak, (and for which on-the-premises child-care must be made available to us.)" While the women presented their list of demands, one woman with a Winchester rifle in her hand stood at the council chambers' doors, guarding herself and the other women.

These Berkeley women have been putting on spontaneous guerilla theater skits in the streets and have made tape recordings to teach women how to deal with hecklers and rapists. They are encouraging women to pick up women hitch hikers and to attend self-defense classes.

Their demands are as follows:

1. Free, frequent public bus transportation for all women from dusk to dawn.
2. Increased, improved adequate lighting for all neighborhoods, including the dark areas around all buildings.
3. That landlords bear the total expense for effective security locks on all windows and doors of Berkeley apartments.
4. That taxpayers' money be diverted from the Berkeley police budget into a fund to hire a staff of women trained in the psychology of rape. That these women will accompany the police on the initial investigation of all rape reports. (This is done in other countries)
5. That further funds be diverted from the Berkeley police budget into the hands of all of the Women's Liberation groups in Berkeley to initiate and maintain public self-defense classes for all women in Berkeley.
6. That self-defense training for all female schoolchildren be introduced throughout the Berkeley school system.
7. That the City Council give Women of the Free Future adequate funds to draw up, print and circulate a pamphlet on How to Prevent Rape.
8. That since the Berkeley police are either unable or unwilling to protect women against rape, any woman in Berkeley who feels that her life is threatened have the right to bear concealed or unconcealed loaded weapons which will deter rape and aid in her self-defense.

RIPPING OFF IS POLITICAL

Rat/Liberation News Service -- Early Thursday morning, Nov. 6, over forty mothers who went into Macy's to get school clothes for their children walked out of the store with armloads of clothes, without bothering to stop at the cash register. They are members of Welfare Rights Organization (a nationwide organization of people living on welfare who are committed to fighting the injustices of the welfare system.)

Ten of the women were arrested by security guards at the 34th St. entrance of Macy's. Before they were taken to a nearby precinct they insisted that Macy's wrap and package all the clothes. At the precinct police officials attempted to dismiss their case quickly by serving the women with summonses and sending them home.

But the women had come prepared to make their point. They had all arranged for the care of their children so that they could stay to be heard in court. Police officers repeatedly tried to take the clothes from the women, but the women did not allow them to. They knew that the school clothes were important evidence. If they didn't have the clothes the police would charge them with stealing all sorts of things -- which would lessen the political implications of their act.

In Night Court the ten mothers pleaded guilty to reduced charges of criminal trespass and were paroled by the judge, who dismissed the case saying that their action was "political". The D.A. and the arresting officer were mad that the women were getting away too easily. They singled out one woman, Jeanette Washington, and charged her with non-cooperation with a police officer because she refused to have her picture taken when she was booked. These charges were also thrown out.

The Welfare Rights Organization has been waging a fight to get money for school clothes for children. Two years ago the N.Y. State legislature cut back the funds for "special allowances" which included money for clothing and furniture; the only time special allowances are now available are in cases of fire and flood. This leaves already hard-pressed welfare mothers with no way of providing clothes for their children.

The WRO has concentrated on trying to obtain federal funds from local Boards of Education. Five years ago congress passed Title I, a bill designed to put funds into the education budget for the use of welfare and low income children. The money was primarily intended for school clothing and lunches. Instead these funds have been used to subsidize a drum and bugle corp in one state, gym programs, swimming pools.

The Welfare Rights Organization wants $100 per year per child for school clothing from Title I money. They tried legal ways: demonstrations at City Hall, appeals to the mayor's office and meetings with the Board of eduction . Then they decided more direct action was needed. With the weather getting colder there wasn't any time left for administrative bullshit. Five hundred mothers signed up to participate in "shop-ins". Two days later Macy's was hit.

Questions To Be Raised

Women in Cambridge, Mass. and Washington, D.C. have written to us about their plans around participation in the Revolutionary Peoples Constitutional Convention. Both groups had made lists of topics they felt would be important for women's workshops to deal with. We feel that these questions will need to be dealt with again and that they relate to our ongoing struggle. We don't see answers at this time; we expect there will be more questions raised.

(from Cambridge):

relationship of the women's movement to third world movements

What does Third World leadership mean? Do we accept that concept? How do we deal with the questions concerning leadership that have come out of the women's movement in relationship to the concept of leadership put forth by the Panthers?

What does a new constitution mean?

a vision of a new society, demands, programs that immediately serve the people

Does a political program for the women's movement make sense? (what is a political program, what kind have we and should we develop)

What does it mean to develop anti-racist politics in the women's movement?

what has been and should be our relationship to Black women?

How does the present women's movement deal with the questions posed by the Gay Movement?

(from Washington):

What skills we need to have and how we can learn them (such as automechanics, electronics, self-defense, etc)

Women's media development - films, radio, photography, publications, etc.

Women's culture - art, music, poetry, theatre

Feminist liberation of new generations: infant and child care, schools, adult chauvinism, sex-role programming, etc.

The politics of health projects and women's health care

Forward from Earth Day -- how to bring revolutionary women's consciousness to the ecological crisis (population control as imperialist, consumerism, life-style changes, etc)

Women's projects around racism - how do sexism and racism relate? what would be a new women's way to relate to the black and brown struggles at home?

Women's projects around imperialism - how do sexism and imperialism relate? what would be a new women's focus on the Vietnam war and support for the Vietnamese struggle? how can we concretely express solidarity with Third World women?

Within all our work, we are also struggling with some general questions:

Collectives -- living, working, present, future - you know, everything

Sister love - female state, lesbian nation, feminist life force - conceptions of our future

Defense and Support of New institutions -- self defense, financial sustinence, etc.

SELF-PORTRAIT I — V. KENT

Change in N.Y. Women's Center

Announcement of the October 15th meeting at the New York City Women's Center.

Previously it had been decided to keep the NYC Women's Center open with a loose structure so that women of widely varying affiliations and politics within the movement could meet and exchange ideas freely. The October 15th meeting dealt with just what groups were in the movement and in what ways individuals and groups should use the center.

Motions passed at the meeting included:

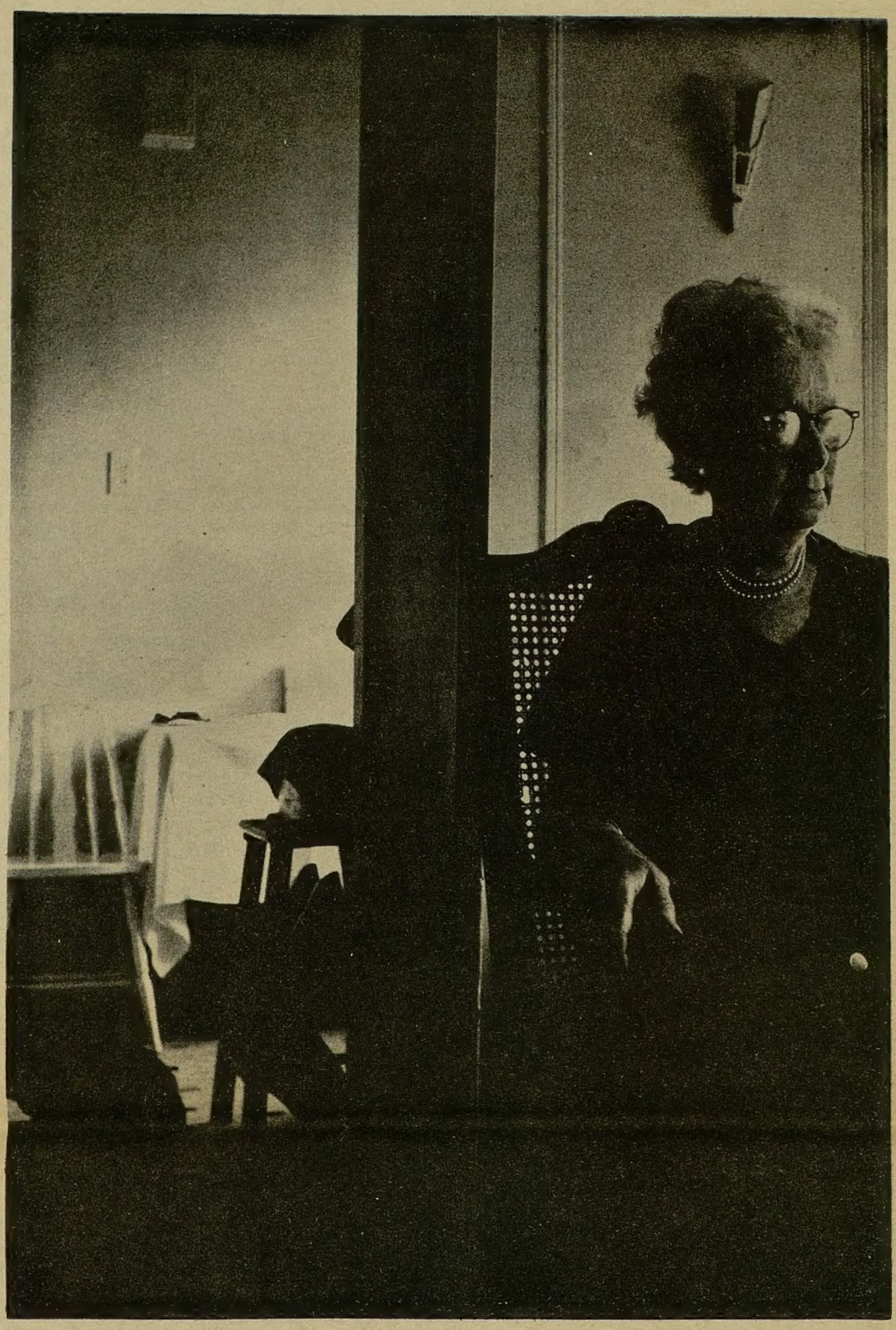
1) No women running for political office or actively and publicly engaged in campaigning for another person seeking political office within this system can serve on the steering, speakers, forum, fund raising, financial or literature collectives of the center.

2) No organized political party or subdivision seeking power within this system (by election) or representation or publication of such a party can use the name of the W.L. center in any way that implies identification of the party organization or idividual with the Center. Any breach of this rule will be met with public repudiation by the Center.

3) No member of the SWP-YSA or any party set up or controlled by the SWP can serve on any collective connected with running the Center.

For a copy of the minutes of this meeting write to: Women's Liberation Center of
New York City
36 West 22nd. St.
New York, N.Y. 10010

Mae



Mae is eighty-six and
The sole surviving sister of three brothers and three sisters.
Of all of them
only my Grandmother married.
Nellie and Mae chose not to
living at home, instead, to take care of their mother.
When she died,
they took care of their two alcoholic brothers
and each other.
Mae worked and Nellie kept house.

I don't remember Willie
who used to work two weeks and drink two weeks, Mom said.
He was a card shark
and once when Mom was tired of losing at poker
he dealt her four queens,
but gave himself a straight flush.

Archie was the blacksheep.
He drank too much and he didn't work
which must have been hard on Nellie and Mae
who never touched the stuff—
except for Nellie who used to have two glasses of port a day.
It's good for your blood,said Mae.

For fifty years
Mae was a switchboard operator
and supported all four of them.
She talks about the office alot
and how the company would almost fall apart
when she went on vacation
because she knew all the numbers by heart,
and none of the executives had to look them up.

She still has all the presents
they gave her over the years
safely wrapped in their boxes,
and gives them to us one by one
as Christmases pass.

Archie died along time ago.
Grandma two summers ago.
and Nellie this Spring.
While before Nellie and Mae's life was lonely
they at least had each other.
Now Mae misses Nellie deeply,
Nora, our cousin in Scotland, wrote:
"Nellie must have been all-in-one to you."

Mae lives alone in New York City
in a two room apartment
that is made darker
by the eight year old paint
than by her age.

My Mother and brother and I
are all she has, but we live in Iowa
and aren't much daily good.
She says, without the television
she wouldn't know what to do
"I wish my mother had had it
during the day when Nellie and I went to work."

One Christmas we came to visit
and the TV was broken;
Mae couldn't bring herself to spend the money
to fix it.
So we brought them one
Mom said that the money was nothing
compared to what at T.V. would mean to Nellie and Mae.

This Thanksgiving when I came
it was working
and we watched it while I mended my coat.
It was a good time.
I like to get her talking about
what our family was like when she was young.

My Grandmother used to ask me if i had a boyfriend
and I would lie.
I knew Mae would get around to it
but in thinking of her life,
I told her, when she asked,
that I didn't intend to marry.
She said she and Nellie would always talk
about how I was probably going to take after them,
and be an independent woman.
"Men, who needs them," she said.

But you should have seen her eyes
when the waiter talked to us later
in the little restaurant across the street
or when my brother walks into the room.
And she often talks of all the boyfriends Nellie had
and how this or that one wanted to marry her.
Mom told me long ago why Mae didn't have boyfriends:
She had acne.
"Men," she says, "who needs them."
But she doesn't mean it.

I loved visiting her.
She would take my arm when we walked
and proudly introduce me to the people she knew:
"This is my grand niece all the way from Iowa."
But it will be different at Christmas.
When my brother comes,
she'll reach for his arm.

The next day I came early with the car
so we could go for a ride,
but the elevator was broken
and Mae can't walk six flights.

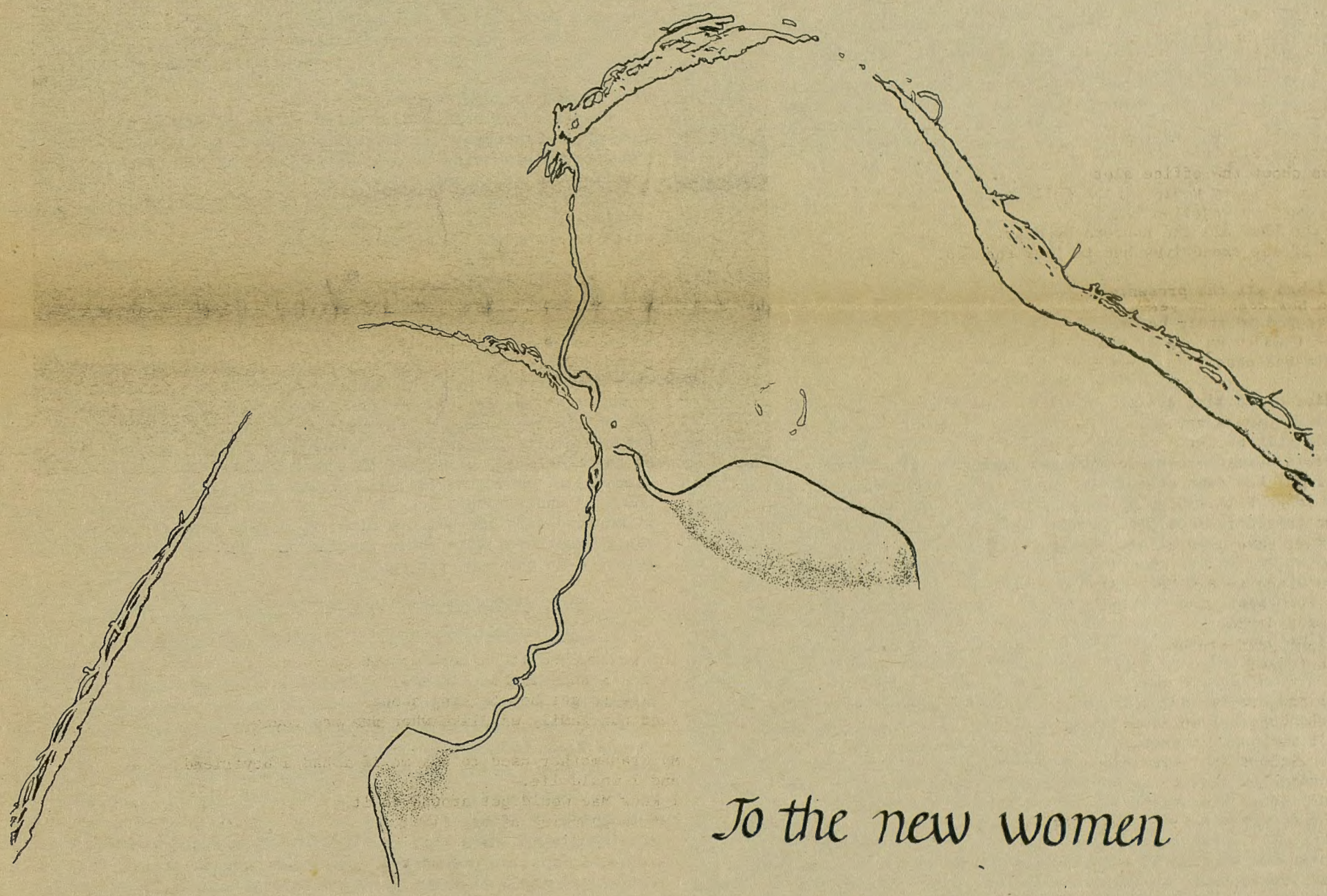
It remains on the blink
for the same reason
that during the fuel strike,
the landlords on 59th street ordered
the heat turned down in the building to save money
even though there was plenty in the tank.
Nellie was sick,
and they spent the two weeks in bed.

One time when Mae was coming home
from visiting Nellie at the Nursing home,
she was so entranced by a little girl on the bus
that she missed her stop--
ending up in hippyville
as she calls it.
She passed a woman
drunk and standing alone with a dress box.
She was very refined, said Mae,
and men were standing around
waiting for her to pass out.
The refined woman called to Mae:
"I'll give you this dress
if you'll call my family in Jersey."
But my Aunt didn't want to leave her
for fear of the men
and waited until help came.
I was surprised; Mae is scared of the city.

I took her to dinner again
and we sat next to a woman
with two small children
who was very chic and drinking before dinner.
She scolded the girl and praised the boy
saying cute things for the benefit of
the people around.
But the man she was inevitably waiting for
never came....

And after watching the pain of that woman
And helping the refined woman,
After supporting Archie and Willie their whole lives
And having no elevator and no heat...

After such a capable, godly life,
Mae, why do you still talk of boyfriends?



To the new women

If you can see
my suffering
I am afraid;

Fear of
illegitimate suffering;
I don't deserve you.
But you accept me.

You don't say
   Go way
   It's not important
I can't accept concern.
I don't believe it.

The negations live
around the eyes.
You search into
the woman
and I look away.

Help me.

DAYCARE CAMPAIGNS AND CO-OPS

The following article was written by a sister in Bloomington:

POLITICAL TENDENCIES IN THE MOVEMENT

At Grinnell in November midwest representatives of Women's Liberation got an oblique view of what is happening in the movement. Oblique because the political positions expressed there were not explicitly analyzed or compared. Nor was their meaning or direction shown. Differences were left in an inchoate form.

Differences there were aplenty. A basic cleavage was hinted at the first night of the conference. Marlene Dixon, Shannon of Twin Oaks, and a Grinnell woman made up a panel supposedly on "Definition of Women's Liberation." This was an open meeting, open to men despite the topic, and the one which greeted visitors who had traveled from afar to Iowa. (Some felt uncomfortable to walk into a mixed meeting as their first contact with a women's conference.) But the way the topic was handled was appropriate for a mixed audience--it was not really concerned with a definition of women's liberation. It was concerned with telling the women's movement what was wrong with it (from one point of view) or with (from another point of view) the "subversion of the women's movement by representatives of the male-dominated left," as one discussant, a woman from Iowa City, put it.

During the panel presentations Marlene Dixon had called on the women's movement to join the "anti-imperialist front." She had belabored the "middle-class" nature of Women's Liberation, called the various activities in which WL engages, such as abortion-law repeal or abortion counselling and day care programs, "counter-revolutionary." The one question from the floor that opposed her view was not answered by her, but by a woman in the audience who succeeded in confusing the issue. No one knew whether she agreed or disagreed, at that point, with the questioner. And after that question, the meeting ended. Perhaps it should be added that an earlier question, put by a visitor from Bloomington, Indiana, made Marlene qualify her statements about day care. She was willing to accept free, 24-hour child care as a revolutionary demand.

At no other point in the conference was there an opportunity to explore the political differences that these exchanges represented. On Sunday when the final panel was trashed and suggestions were made for topics for small discussion groups, the subject of political tendencies and directions in the movement was offered. But those who might have participated in and benefitted from such a discussion followed Marlene into another place and another discussion. So the confrontation of different views, the study of the meaning of these differences, was avoided.

Nevertheless, during Saturday's workshops on more specific topics and issues, differing politics were clear. The workshop on child care provides a good example. The politics of child care expressed there can be reduced to two positions.

One, acceptable to Marlene, stressed the importance of free, 24-hour child care as a demand to be made on government. Child-care facilities set up by members of the middle class to meet their own needs were belittled by this position because of the class served. The nature of the care given, the nature of its organization went unregarded. In fact the idea of quantity instead of quality ruled--how many children, how many facilities, how much money. Money itself was the central quantity stressed--the cooperation of parents was rejected by one woman as a fraud practiced on the working class. "In this society time equals money," she said; "so if you ask parents to give time, you are asking them to give money." Child care campaigns started on these ideas boasted of the sums demanded: in Texas, $100,000. Such large sums were seen as necessary for the hiring of personnel to run the centers. With the perspective of free--absolutely free--care, the need for experts to staff the centers necessarily follows. And of course the great virtue of such centers is seen as their ability to take in working-class children.

The other position on child care stressed the quality of care given, the kind of organization as the essential questions. It saw the cooperative principle as the heart of revolutionary change in the organization of life activities. Cooperative child care means that the parents themselves operate the center. It is not a matter of their attempting to control someone else who actually operates the center (does the work, makes daily decisions, has expertise, or gets a wage). Their sharing of the actual work is important not only in their own lives in that they learn to work in groups, to have enjoyment, understanding, and compassion for each other, but also for the lives of the children, who see a model in their parents for their own behavior. The children learn too that child care is not drudgery work assigned to the females of society.

To the charges that cooperative centers are a luxury that only the middle class can afford, representatives from Bloomington, Indiana, offered their experience. After a couple of years and the establishment of four cooperative centers, interest in these actual, viable centers has grown to a point where it is now possible to make demands on the university as employer. The child care campaign now initiated there is demanding release time from work for employees who want to participate in the cooperative centers. Universities as corporate employers differ little from other corporations. Already workers from Westinghouse and G.E. in Bloomington are talking of applying the cooperative principle to their child care problems.

The political positions inherent in these approaches to child care need to be made explicit. Twenty-four hour child care is not the ultimate in revolutionary demands even though one could not demand more in terms of hours. The time or the money (or the equation of the two) are not the essence of the question. The emphasis on money or on time as money can be seen as a bourgeois mind-set, the influence that all of us must fight in ourselves as its manifestations are revealed. But as important to theory are some of the implications of the 24-hour demand. In Iowa, cooperative child-care centers were put down because they served the middle class and therefore the "less oppressed" women. Working-class women were described sometimes as "more oppressed" and sometimes as "really oppressed." This distinction, or course, denies the validity of women's liberation as a revolutionary movement. If only working-class women are really oppressed, then what need have we for any movement of women? The working class is oppressed--so what else is new? The new seems to be that women as a sex are not oppressed: after all these centuries, after Astell, Wollstonecraft, Mott, Stanton, etc., the women's movement discovers that women as a sex are not oppressed. And this, according to its left wing, which pretends to recognize and bless each new revolutionary battalion.

If women and their self-activity are seen as non-revolutionary, how are the "really oppressed" seen? The implication behind all the patronizing work done "for" the working class is that workers are simply inert victims, incapable of self-activity, incapable of fighting their own battles or even of seeing their own needs. They must be taught, led, cajoled, or tricked into self-defense by revolutionaries, who will ride into power on the back of the hypothetical monster they have activated. The only transformation necessary for this event, this so-called revolution, amounts to a personnel change at the top of society. The good guys will be in instead of the bad guys. The good guys will decide on how to spend the money, who is to eat, who is to work, how they are to work, etc. With this vision of history, with this concept of people and of classes, the 24-hour child care demand fits perfectly.

What kind of politics is this? First of all it is bourgeois through and through. It is really counter-revolutionary. It is even worse than doing Nixon's dirty work for him---especially in the field of child care, though not only there. It is counter-revolution posing as revolution; it is the pretense of the thing in place of the real thing. It is the element of confusion which is the usual contribution of the middle class to a revolutionary situation.

What else is it? It is distinctly male. Only men (or women intellectually dominated by men) could conceive of child care in such purely quantitative terms, could fail to see the dynamics of human relations and the need for revolutionary change there, could fail to see why women will never agree to turn their children over to the state (by whomever run). It is not the aim of women simply to get rid of the kids so that they can join the men on the barricades. They want to change the relationships between adults and children, between the sexes, content and form, so that the human qualities that make life worth living--joy, compassion, understanding, and growth--can live. That is the point of their revolution; it begins with their "everyday" lives. It may end with the seizure of state power--when the bourgeois state interferes with their revolution. But seizure will be a means to an end--not the end itself.

In Iowa City, Women's Liberation set up a child care cooperative in June. Since then there have been three other centers started as outgrowths of the first. Women's Liberation people have been involved to a great extent in only the first center. At the moment, things are going as well as can be expected considering we have no funds with which to work. The females and males have started to get together in separate consciousness raising groups after several very heated arguments about the value of separate meetings. It has been impossible to keep in very close touch with the other centers because of lack of time and energy.

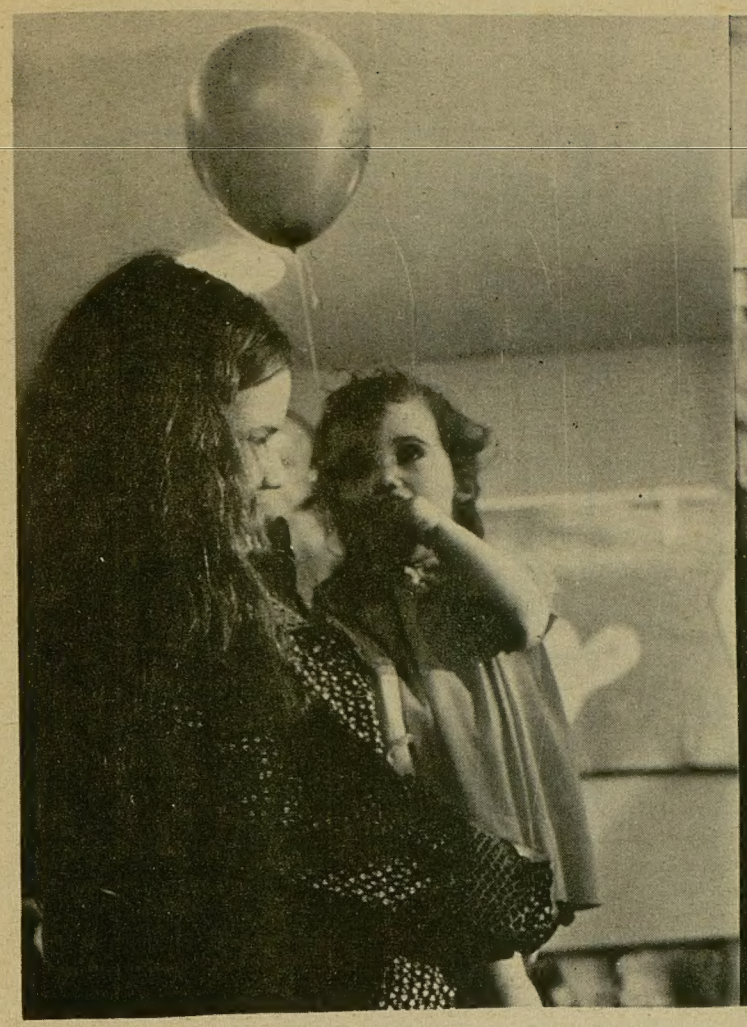
With the exception of one other center, there isn't much feminist content in the centers. Among the other groups who have contacted us and expressed interest in setting up child care centers, there is little hope of anything but a typical nursery school atmosphere with traditional sex roles.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT DAY CARE

I

After having worked in child care (organizing and working in centers) only one thing is clear and that is that the issues of child care are not clear cut! There have been endless discussions in the women's movement about child care as a revolutionary or reformist demand. At this point, those discussions are useless. Child care is reformist in that we can only do so much in this society. It is revolutionary because it is a basic need of all women of all classes.

(Continued on next page)



(Continued From p. 8)

Any child care that women can work on now has many serious problems. Most women have been working on getting together cooperative child care centers controlled by the community (people who are involved in them). Now if these centers are really community controlled there will be very few non-sexist centers. Most of the people involved in child care coops are people who have the time and interest to devote to working in centers or at least in coming to meetings where decision-making takes place. So far, in the Iowa City centers, most of the people in that position have been students, semi-political freaks and a few feminist-oriented women.

At this point I am very skeptical of cooperative child-care centers with any connection whatsoever with industry or business. I don't know that they shouldn't exist. We should only be aware that the people could probably only have token control--as in the state-funded child care programs for low income people that are now in existence.

In the next few years there will probably be several other types of child care cropping up. Universities, big business, and the state are all beginning to be pushed into child care by either liberal guilt or hopefully increasing power of women. They will provide child care which will begin to free women. They will fuck up a lot of children. Women must have child care. I only hope the children can be saved . . . eventually.

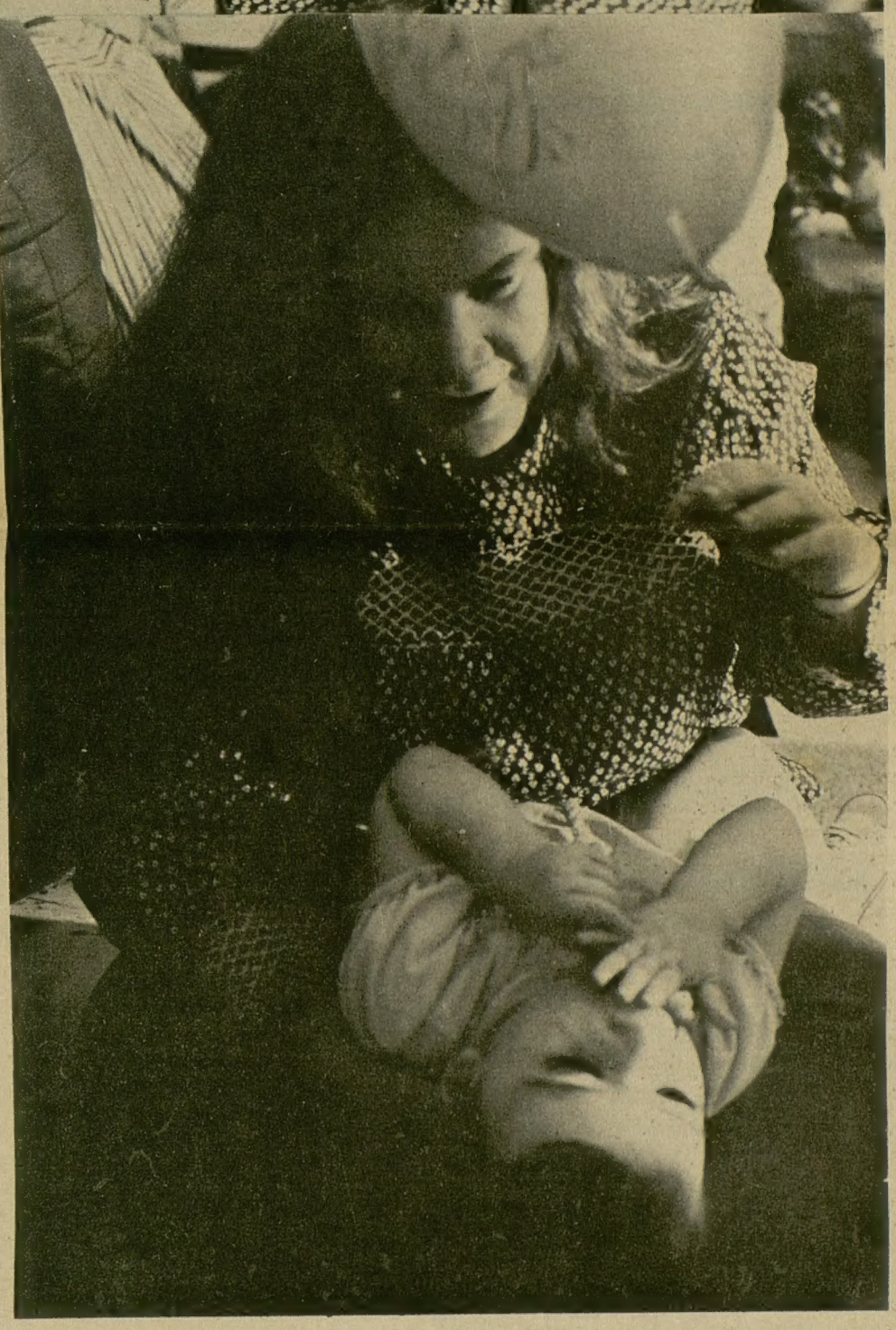
II

In spite of all the hassles involved in child care, we should continue to work on it. I have come to several conclusions about where our time should be spent. We should continue working on establishing child care centers--at minimum as a survival tool for women. Women should devote some time to working in centers, if possible. People with experience in setting up childcare centers or coops should make their experiences available to other people who are interested in child care. (This can be done either through writing on how to set up child care or speaking with people.) We must be certain to make clear to other people and to ourselves that the limited child care controlled by the people at this time is not an end.

Through the centers we work on we will be helping women and children survive in this system that destroys so much in all of us. We can be free to learn our own ways of relating to children. Child care centers have the potential of bringing people together for mutual support and in some situations become an intermediary step between the nuclear family and some as yet undetermined living situation.

One thing women must do is beware of wasting time and energy on child care projects where the people involved will have little or no control. That includes most universities, big business, Kentucky Fried Childcare type things and state programs. The liberals are going to be involved in these programs, so they are inevitably going to exist. I just don't feel it is worth the frustration to put energy into this type of childcare. These institutions are not going to hand over any control to the people. It may be difficult, but we must learn to recognize when it is a frustrating waste of time.

It is very difficult to come to any conclusions at this point about organizing women through child care projects. The only thing to say is that it is very difficult and energy consuming. Women who have children and who are usually married have very few alternatives. The least we can do is lend our support to the women involved in child care. We also must constantly try to raise people's consciousness about sexism and all other political issues. The ideal would be to have a radical feminist perspective at the base of the entire program, but that is not possible in most situations.



It is very early in our development to make any dogmatic decisions about what is correct or incorrect concerning child care. We have barely scratched the surface in knowing how to meet the needs of women with children of every economic class. We have yet to know exactly what we are capable of doing and what is worth doing.

I realize that we are still relatively untogether on the issue of child care. I have tried to bring to the surface some of the problems we have run into in our experiences in setting up child care centers. There is a lot more analysis that needs to be done.

ANNOUNCE...

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We received the first issue of the Newsletter of Lousiville Women's Liberation. They state that their newsletter does not represent all of Louisville W.L. It is put out by a Communications Committee which will try to print anything Louisville women write - articles to reflect the opinions of the individual writers. Louisville W.L. has been in existence for a litlle over a year. They have a library set up, a child care group of men and women have set up a cooperative child care center, women are taking karate, they are holding a class of WL at the Free University and have a problem pregancy and abortion counseling project.

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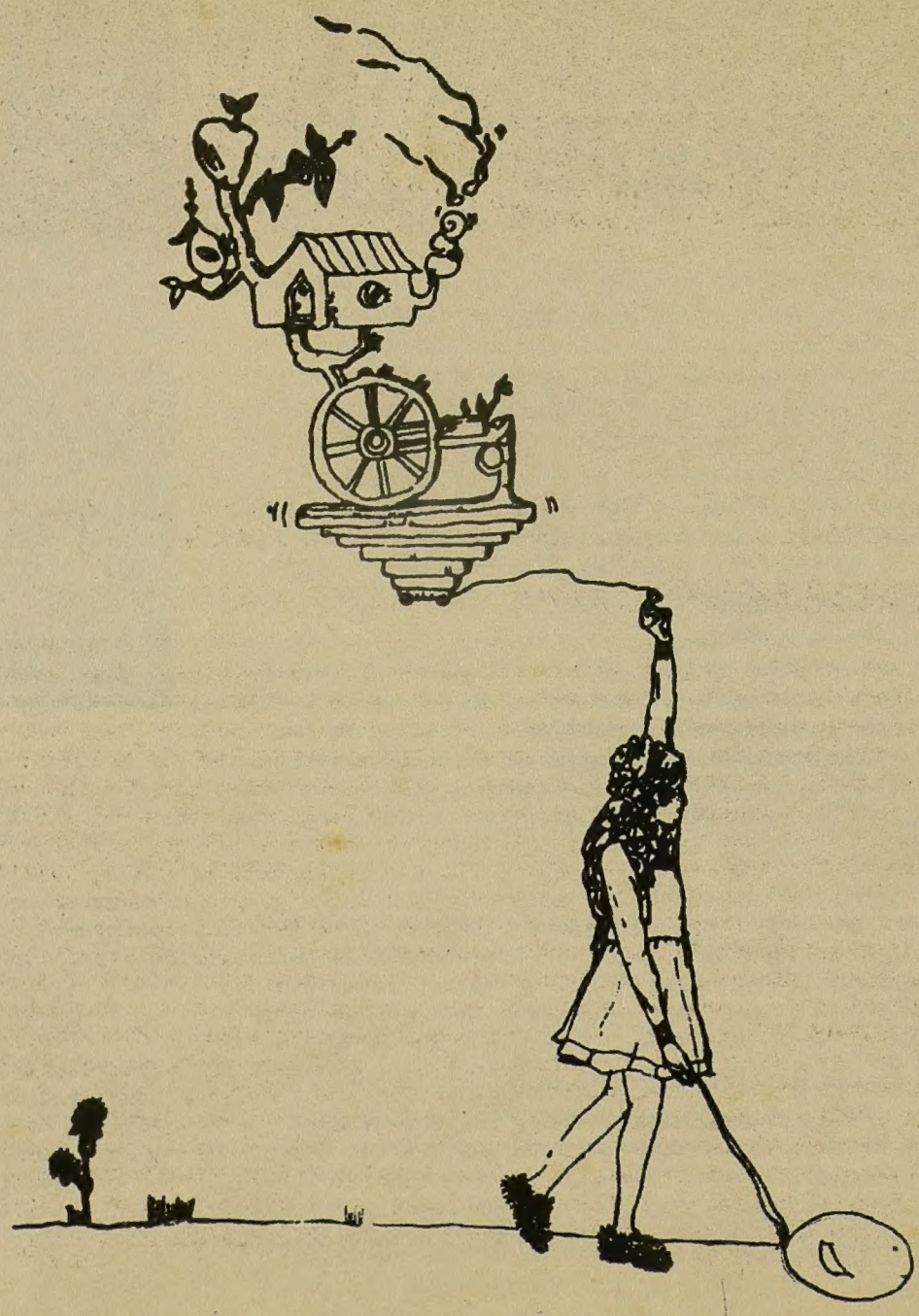
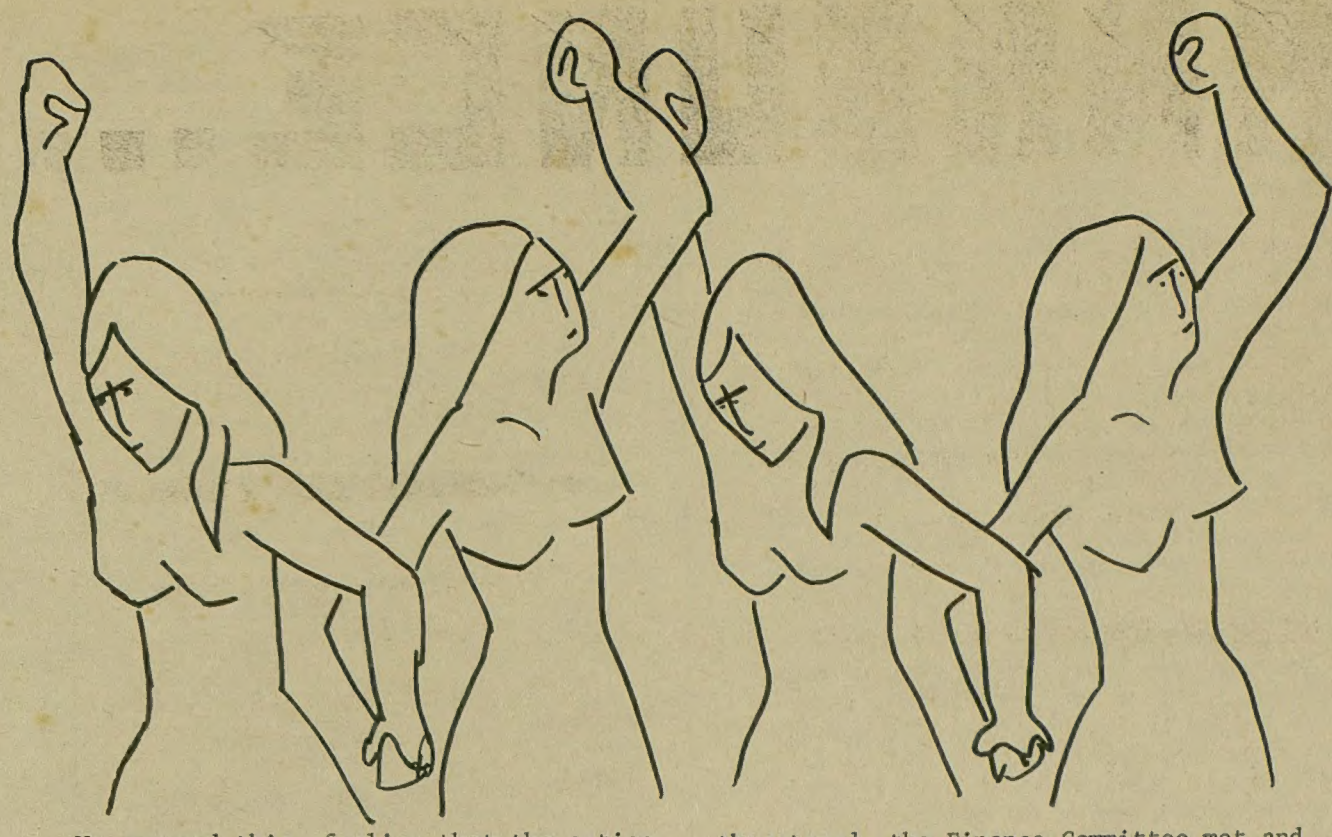
We are a collective of 10 women functioning either as a front for a world wide conspiracy of Radical Lesbians or the house cornfield of the Women's Movement.





Please address all future correspondence concerning a Journal of Female Liberation (No More Fun & Games, The Female State) to:

Cell 16
16 Lexington Avenue
Cambridge, Mass. 02138

We are no longer producing and distributing the Journal at the Boylston Street address because that office has been taken over and is being occupied by female members of YSA/SWP (Young Socialist Alliance of Socialist Workers Party) who had been working out of that office. Since November 14, we have had no access to mail addressed there.

The takeover last week was the climax of a long series of troubles with YSA. The following is an attempt to give the history of Cell 16 and to describe what led up to the frustrating and depressing situation created by the takeover.

After working together informally for about a year, we, along with Roxanne Dunbar (now working in New Orleans) and Jeanne Lafferty (now in YSA), established ourselves as a small group to put out the Journal and work on a feminist analysis. This was in May 1969. We took the name Cell 16 to emphasize the organic nature of the movement, of which we were just one cell. We did not wish to <u>be</u> the movement or have all women join <u>us</u>: we wished to be part of the movement, a radical and creative force in finding the most relevant directions for the feminist movement.

Because we were a small group and in political agreement, our democracy was spontaneous. When political disagreement arose with one or two of our original members, we disbanded the group as a formal entity rather than to either impose the majority will on those who disagreed or waste time in conflict with each other.

At this time we moved our office equipment to Somerville, intending that the Journal should remain, as it always had been, a strong and unified feminist statement. We formed a Committee to ensure control over the established character and purpose of the Journal and the office whose primary function was the production of the Journal. In this respect the Finance Committee, as it was called, was an attempt to replace that particular function of Cell 16.

A Journal fund (including income from sales of the Journal) supported Journal printings and reprintings, the office rent and expenses, and the salary of one person working full time.

Cell 16 having disbanded, the Finance Committee had political control only over the Journal, administrative control only over the office finances, and no control over any other activities in the office. Thus there were no longer any clear-cut or natural limits on who could use the office.

The office did begin to be used by various women with whom we were not actively associated and in whose activities we didn't necessarily want to participate. We felt that we could have no legitimate objections as long as the primacy of the Journal was respected. These other activities were being made possible through the Journal's financial support of the office.

It was at this point that some women who had worked with us previously revealed that they had joined YSA. They began to "organize" the informal office meetings into democratically run business meetings, and brought other YSA women in. The woman on salary and others working in the office on Journal distribution became alarmed since the YSA had a reputation for infiltration and takeover. They tried to keep the YSA women out of the office, finally going so far as to change the lock on the office door.

We opposed this, feeling that the action taken against the YSA women was inappropriate; that until there was an overt attempt to take control of the Journal or office we were not justified in purging people with whom we had worked comfortably in the past.

The women who had serious disagreement with the female YSA members left. We moved the office to Boston. Many more YSA/SWP women then "joined" Female Liberation.

The office became a highly organized women's center. The weekly business meetings (to which we never went because we didn't recognize their right to alter the purpose of the office) presumed to vote on all office decisions, not just decisions on their activities. This was intolerable. And our political disagreements with them on feminism as well as their general disrespect for us and our work had by this time become increasingly intolerable as well.

In many of their statements and by the action of joining YSA they indicate that they believe that a feminist movement is insufficient to accomplish fundamental social change. In their view SWP will be the vanguard of any change that comes. Women are merely one segment of the masses they will lead.

The YSA/SWP politics lends them to believe that they are justified in any intervention because their understanding of social change is better than anyone else's. Their function as they see it as as leaders of the masses. These masses must be molded into movements, infiltrated and controlled in order to be directed in the correct way.

For tactical reasons they confuse the meaning of a group with the meaning of a movement. Under the guise of saying that no one should be excluded from movements they attempt to prevent the exclusion of anyone from any group. This means that any group can be infiltrated with ease.

The YSA women insisted on using the name Female Liberation as a name for their group even though we had always asserted that the name should not be used as a group name because we wanted all women in the movement to feel free to use it as the movement name.

In our office, moreover, they established coalitions with groups with which we had no political agreement, only common goals - as when whey worked with anti-feminists on abortion law repeal.

Their use of coalitions has been to give them access to greater numbers of people. The effect is to neutralize the integrity and intensity of individual groups.

The Journal fund was still supporting the office and original Journal activists were still doing all the clerical work of maintaining the mailing lists and filling Journal orders.

Since the expanded activities and coalitions had made the purpose of the office confused and the functioning so diffuse that even the future of the Journal seemed threatened, the Finance Committee met and decided that we had to re-establish the original principles by placing the office money especially allocated for future Journal printings and reprintings into a separate bank account.

This would have separated it from the account used generally by consent of the business meeting group for their various projects. (Up until then, these projects were financed largely by the Journal profits, contrary to our original intentions when we set up the office.)

We said that we would continue to pay the office expenses out of the Journal fund and agreed that they could continue to use the office provided they didn't interfere with the Journal work.

Two representatives of the business meeting group agreed to these conditions.

However, at their next business meeting they voted to dissolve the Finance Committee, to keep all the Journal money, to choose their own Journal committee to put out future Journals, and to incorporate as "Female Liberation, Inc." under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in order to protect their use of that name and to attempt to establish a legal right to the money, Journals, and mail.

The Corporation accuses us of trying to destroy the Women's movement by not permitting them to use the Journal as capital to finance their activities.

Our response to this is that they are not the movement, only one of the many diverse groups within it; nor is the movement dependent on their organizing activities. Female liberation is a response to an objective reality of oppression not a hysteria drummed up by organizers.

We have always asserted our belief that movements grow only when there are vital individuals and groups doing what feels most important and relevant and progressing as fast as they can in their analysis: developing and spreading the ideas that brought them together.

They should not attempt to <u>become</u> the movement themselves by bringing everyone into their group (thus impeding its efficiency and diluting its message), but offer their ideas and analysis to others through writing and talking.

The greater the number of groups which are encouraged to contribute their various perspectives io the movement in an undiluted form, the richer and more varied the whole movement will grow. It will be less likely that it will turn into a one-issue movement.

At present we are operating out of our old Cell 16 office and again calling ourselves Cell 16. Those who have been interested in or have agreed with the principles expressed in previous Journals should address future correspondence to us. It may be impossible for us ever to get the mail addressed to the office in Boston

Cell 16: Dana Densmore, Lisa Leghorn, Abby Rockefeller, Betsy Warrior, Jayne West

In our fifth issue we did a page called Things Men Can Do. It was a smashing success. Not suprising. Men are a smashing success -- writing about men, having a man, or the ultimate smashing success of being a man. What made our page even more successful than it might have been was the liberal, easily digestible content. There was nothing we suggested for men to do that was difficult. We suggested they discover, they think, they cry, they remember. Men could easily follow the advice we gave by setting a few minutes aside a day in between fucking their chicks or running THEIR movement to meditate on their privileged position.

The page was reprinted in several movement publications (Movement with a capitol M not to be confused with the Women's Liberation Movement). It was hung on walls of student or radical newspaper offices. But very conveniently the bottom part of that page was left off. Underneath our suggestions we excerpted a part of Robin Morgan's "Goodbye To All That" and an inch square block for men who want to write in our paper was provided suggesting that they sharpen their crayons. Conveniently we had drawn a thin line to divide the type (which was the bottom section) from the handwriting of our suggestions so movement papers could easily cut off the top -- the palatable from the bottom. We even realize that they probable thought the two were separate. But they weren't. They merely represented the schizophrenia involved in women (the oppressed) relating to men (the oppressors).

We didn't give that page the time or the thought that we have given to most other pages we have printed. We didn't talk together to iron out the differences that we had among us over the subject. We threw it together the night before the paper came out. The stuff that we have worked hard on has been about women and what women can be doing because it is women who need the changes we are talking about most desperately. And now as women we can only struggle to relate our experiences and muddle through a seeming mirage of complexes to find a direction in which to work. It is not easy to find the answers we need but we need them and should not be wasting time supplying copy to a male mutilated and yes -- a still male dominated movement or supplying suggestions for men -- it is women with whom our concern lies.

Things for Men to do:

- Discover what your privileges are as part of a privileged caste
- Discover why you can't give someone else your privileges
- Think about what you feel when you look a woman up and down.
- Kiss a brother.
- Try to be emotional about something close to your heart.
- Hold your legs together every time you sit down for a whole day. Cry
- Remember all the times you felt like crying when your dad played with you too roughly.
- Discover what it's like to be called irrational when you are just expressing strong feelings on an issue that's important to you.
- Think about the difference between a relationships of two women and one of a man and a woman.

The things we have written about women have mostly been reprinted by women, for it is women who are concerned about their lives -- not men. Movement male papers cannot seem to assimilate the stuff we write unless it is about them (nicely about them) or unless it is written in male movement rhetoric -- unless it is good agit prop for the (their) revolution. The personal experiences about women would not be political enough for their presses and the criticisms women have of movement macho is too divisive for them. Ask them to cry and they'll print that. Ask them to print what Seattle women have to say about the macho maneuvers of the Seattle Liberation Front and that's another story altogether. We women are probably pretty lucky that how and what we write does not interest the male left for we need time to determine where we should be moving and the male left has never cared let alone had much to offer in terms of constructive analysis for anyone but white radical males.

We were really sweet and they loved us but we were not really being us -- we were not really being honest. We said, "Discover why you can't give someone else your privileges", but that is to say the opposite of what it is really all about. Those privileges they hold that are decent we want and must determine how to take. That is if they cannot discover how to give them to us. And those privileges that are indecent - the privilege that comes by being a male in a system that denies the value of being female unless you are filled with a prick most of the time -- those privileges have to be removed by any means necessary. If men are holding on to those privileges, they're going to be in the way. They can deal with that as best they can -- we have no suggestions.

But we do have the following -- another sucessful episode of:

THINGS FOR MEN TO DO

PART II

Wrap yourself in dynamite, walk into the Pentagon and LIGHT UP